

**Appropriations Committee
Human Services Subcommittee
February 23, 2022**

**Public Hearing on:
House Bill 5037 AAC the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30th, 2023
(Department of Children and Families)**

Good afternoon Representative Abercrombie, Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Diane Sauer and I am speaking as a member of the Board of Directors for United Services, Inc, a Community Behavior Health Center for 21 towns in Northeaster Connecticut. I am also speaking as an attorney who has been working with disabled individuals and their families since 1979. In these years I have had the honor and privilege of working alongside the dedicated, hardworking and compassionate staff of United Services and of many community non-profit organizations.

I am here to express my support for much needed funding for United Services as well as the many other non-profits, without whom my clients would be lost.

I want to thank you for the 4% Cost of Living Adjustment for community nonprofits that you fought to include in last year's budget. I'm here this afternoon to ask you to honor the long-term plan to address underfunding of community nonprofits and to fund services by \$461 million over five years – an additional 8% in Fiscal Year 2023.

Demand for United Services programs has never been higher. Our staff have now been working for 2 years with a community in crisis. The impacts of the pandemic on mental health cannot be overstated.

Compounding these stressors is the low salaries our underfunded state contracts have forced our agency to provide.

As an agency, we are currently operating at about a 25% vacancy rate, as is most if not all of the other nonprofit service providers. Low wages are the major cause.

Vacancies lead to high caseloads for our remaining staff, and increased stress at an already stressful job. It also leads to a longer wait for services for our clients.

The Governor's proposed budget for the Department of Children and Families does not provide support to existing services and programs that are struggling to keep up with the demand. We urge the Appropriations Committee to fight for funding for these programs by implementing the 8% funding increase.

Please help us help the children and families struggling in our area.